## **Quick Response Report #99**

# GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS) IN SMALL COMMUNITIES: APPLICATION OF GIS IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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# GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS) IN SMALL COMMUNITIES: APPLICATION OF GIS IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The snow began to fall in the early evening on Saturday January 6, 1996; by noon Sunday, over eighteen inches had accumulated throughout the Shenadoah Valley. On Monday the snow finally stopped leaving Washington, D.C. with over 28 inches and 36 inches in the northern Virginia's Shenadoah Valley. Federal, state, and local government agencies were closed for at least three days and most school systems in the region were closed for the week. Television and radio broadcasters along with emergency service agencies urged residents to stay home and enjoy the unplanned break. For most residents, the extensive snow presented difficulties in cleaning their autos, clearing a path to the street, and ensuring that their refrigerators were stocked. Time was needed to allow road crews to clear the streets and roads. For many communities, a state of emergency was declared limiting access to highways to road cleanup crews and emergency service personnel.

The dilemma for many local governments was in providing adequate support for snow clearing crews who were working overtime to make major and minor roads safe for travel. A major concern for local officials and residents was the possibility of power outages caused by storm. Fortunately, the storm covered the area with a light snow that resulted in no significant buildup of ice on power lines. Residents avoided a situation in which they lost power and heat with no possibility for access to a public shelter.

By early February, little melting had occurred until heavy rainfall passed through the area. The heavy rains along with the melting snow caused significant flooding in northern Virginia especially in the Shenadoah Valley. Federal disaster areas were declared in Virginia as flooding damaged homes and businesses. Although many local governments had developed good emergency response plans and geographic information decision support systems, the utility of their systems proved to be disappointing. The following summary is focused on a small rural county in northern Virginia and its attempts to use its geographic information system in emergency response, recovery, mitigation and planning activities associated with the Blizzard of '96 and the resulting flooding.

## **Description of Clarke County**

Clarke County lies in the northern tip of the Shenadoah Valley between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny mountains, 50 miles west of Washington, D.C. The county has a total population of 12,101 as reported in the U.S. Department of Commerce 1990 census. Of these residents 3,097 are in the urban areas (25.6%) and 9,004 (74.4%) classified as rural population. Three major state routes (7, 50, and 340) cut through the small towns of Berryville with 3,097 residents and Boyce which has 512 residents. According to the 1990 census, 115 households had no telephone service. Of the 4,236 households in the county, 327 had no vehicles. The median household income for the 4,185 housing units totaled \$34,636; 8.7% of the population were below the poverty level. The county has a total school enrollment of 2,433 with 181 in preprimary, 1,859 in elementary or high school and 393 in college. Residents attending private school included 10.6% of the school enrollment.

The 1990 census data for Clarke County included a summary of non-institutionalized persons. <u>Table 1</u> reflects the disability status of persons in the county. For all age groups, 584 residents have a mobility or self-care limitation. In a small rural community such as Clarke County, providing emergency services to these residents poses a significant challenge. Accurate identification of the residents with mobility or self-care limitations would be most useful in emergency planning and response efforts.

Clarke County has a total of 4,531 housing units with 834 homes built since 1980. The area has experienced slow growth even though it lies within 60 miles of Washington, D.C. Twenty-six residents use utility gas; 202, bottled gas; 1,738, electricity; 1,507, fuel oil or kerosene; and 733, wood. A loss of electric utilities would affect the 55% of local residents who are dependent on electricity.

#### **Table 1 - Disability of Civilian Non-institutionalized Persons**

Persons 16 - 64 Years With a mobility of self-care limitation With a mobility limitation With a self-care limitation With a work disability With a work disability but in labor force Prevented from working	7,785 316 144 213 623 294 268
Persons 65 years and over With a mobility or self-care limitation With a mobility limitation With a self-care limitation	1,560 268 213 147

Residents 16 years and over who are employed totaled 6,190. Of these residents, 8.2% were in agriculture, 14% in

construction, 15% in manufacturing, 11% in retail trade, 27% in services. Approximately 13% of the workers were employed by the government and 600 residents were self-employed. For the workers 16 and over, 420 worked at home and 2,600 (42%) traveled move than 30 minutes to work. For even a rural community, commuting to work is a significant factor. Appendix A provides detailed summary 1990 census information for Clarke County, and the towns of Berryville and Boyce.

The county uses a manager / administrator form of government with planning, economic development, social services, and recreation agencies reporting to the county administrator.

### The County Geographic Information System

In an attempt to ensure that information would be available to county officials to make sound decisions on land use planning and zoning, the county developed a mapping unit with a geographic information system. The mapping unit is staffed by two employees who use a Sun Micro Station running arcing (Ver.7.0). At the time of the storm and the flooding, the GIS included the following coverage's:

- Highways, streets and roads drawn from the U.S.G.S. 1:24,000 quad sheets;
- Flood zones:
- Parcel layouts with ownership information;
- Rivers, water features, pipelines, power lines, topographical contours, and benchmarks from the U.S.G.S. quad sheets;
- 5-digit ZIP code boundaries from the Postal Service;
- Agriculture districts and easements;
- Historic districts;
- County zoning areas;
- Soils by type;
- Agricultural stabilization Districts;
- Sinkholes;
- County boundaries.

Map files missing from the Clarke County GIS system were detailed information on street names, address ranges, or data reflecting business or resident locations. Information relating to residents drawn from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the census Tiger files was not available on the system. Boundary data files for the county census tracks, block groups, or blocks and the associated 1990 census data were not in the system.

Local officials lacked adequate information on the characteristics of the county's population in areas most affected by the 36 inch snow or the flooding along the Shenadoah River and the Opecen Creek. In addition, data were not available on residents located along the major water features or the level of flooding in the county. For emergency service personnel, response to calls to the 911 Center were complicated by a lack of information on high water along roads, bridges, or areas inaccessible because of the snow. In addition, local officials had no local information to predict the extent of flooding or information on which to base warnings to residents on high water in their area. Although the GIS had U.S.G.S. contour lines and water features drawn from the 1:24,000 quad sheets, information was not included on resident locations, phone numbers of residents or businesses that could be affected by the rising water.

The county 911 Emergency Notification System included information provided by the local phone company on the location of each resident in the county. Directions to each resident had been provided either by the phone company (directions for service installation) or by a Clarke County 911 employee who confirmed directions to a resident's home. The 911 Center maintained the directions to the resident in a computerized database. Although emergency service personnel could find a residence in the county, an actual address for the resident was not available. The lack of accurate addressing for residents outside the small towns in the county made resident geocoding of addresses very limited.

The Shenadoah River flows through Clarke County, and warm weather, which melted snow along with heavy rains in

February caused the Shenadoah to flood several local roads.

### **Enhancing the County Geographic Information System**

U.S. Department of Commerce Tiger files (1994) were provided to Clarke County by Louisiana State University's Public Administration Institute. Data in these files were imported into the ArcInfo GIS. Coverages included roads and streets, water features, railroads, census tracks, census block groups, and census blocks. The value of these data to Clarke County was to add street, road, and water feature names to line segments. Within the towns of Berryville and Boyce, the streets included address ranges. Rural roads were identified by a numbering system for the county.

Resident and business phone listings were obtained for the county from the local phone company and "select phone" listings. These listings included resident addresses with ZIP+4 files when available. Accurate geocoding was accomplished for residents in the towns. Determining the location of the remaining residents would need to be accomplished using another method.

The county manager and the GIS staff stressed the value of accurate locations for residents and businesses in the county. Emergency 911 operations could be enhanced by knowing the actual location of distressed callers. Routing of emergency vehicles could be improved by knowing exact destinations and potential problem areas such as bridges or roads. Warning systems could be adapted to notify residents affected by rising water, chemical spills on state highways or rail lines. Other public agencies could use accurate resident locations for school bus routing, zoning decision, or permit applications.

Interest in creating accurate addresses in the county was shared by James King, postmaster for the town of Berryville. He agreed to assist the county in verifying the location of rural delivery route boxes by ZIP+4 designations. Since the ZIP+4 system follows county road carrier routes, carriers could identify the approximate location on county maps of resident's mail boxes. County staff could verify these address files by direct observation and use portable geo-positing devices for accurate coordinate positioning. Address ranges for rural route boxes were thus linked to the post office route box number. Priority areas were identified which were vulnerable to either natural or chemical hazards. Addressing for these priority areas were to be completed by the county staff.

The county manager and the postmaster both expressed a concern that many local residents wanted to avoid accurate addressing of residents. Avoiding the public eye and maintaining privacy in a rural culture was a major factor that had limited prior addressing efforts. The postmaster noted that many patrons were offended when clerks asked for identification when their personal checks did not have an address. Clerks, however, could often avoid this conflict by recognizing the patron from past contacts.

Both the county manager and postmaster commented that local residents might resist efforts by the county or the post office to identify their residence in a database. Experience from other local communities to name roads and have accurate locations of residents had met resistance from rural residents. Both the postmaster and county manager agreed that initiatives to name rural roads and use a numbering system to identify resident locations should be coordinated. Linking local addressing to enhancing the 911 system where residents would benefit from change could be critical in avoiding conflict with residents.

## **Expanding GIS Users**

A critical factor in making the GIS more useful in emergency management was the expansion of the system to personal computers. By using ArcView2, the county could use all existing county coverages, including the new street and road census Tiger files. This GIS could be used on personal computers in the 911 dispatch office, volunteer fire stations, the Clarke County school board, town planning and zoning offices, and the county emergency management office. Using ArcView2 on either a desktop or portable computer would extend the county's GIS applications beyond the current two staff members. With a minimum of 16MB of RAM and 100 MB of hard disk space, ArcView2

provides other county and town agencies with current map files from the Clarke County GIS. ArcView2 provides an easy to use map display and query system. For emergency management, the personal computer GIS provides agencies with the ability to identify residents, to notify residents in a specific area of a risk, to make informed zoning or permitting decisions, or to route emergency service vehicles. Networking of the county offices will allow agencies taking advantage of the PC based GIS to use or copy current map files without taking the valuable time of the GIS county staff. Decision making can be enhanced by this easy-to-use GIS tool.

#### **Future Initiatives**

The county manager noted several initiatives that would enhance the use of GIS in emergency management decision making. Although flooding had not been an extensive problem in the past ten years, the snowfall and rain of January and February 1996 left the county uninformed on where flooding would occur. Shenadoah River levels were available from sites over 25 miles from the county. Information on local river and creek levels would have been very helpful in warning residents of flooding dangers or in suggesting evacuation routes. In addition, elevation points along the Shenadoah River and county creeks would allow county officials to more accurately predict areas vulnerable to flooding. Verification of FEMA flood maps would also ensure that permitting and zoning decisions would be accurate.

Accurate identification of residences and buildings was considered by the county as a high priority. The initial step in linking post office rural delivery routs to county road segments (thus creating address ranges similar to more populated area) was an important step. Naming rural roads and assigning addresses would be the next step and easier to accomplish with accurate location of rural delivery box identification.

#### **Conclusions**

County officials in this small rural jurisdiction overwhelmingly cited the value of GIS in supporting decision making at the local level. GIS with resident information, resource data, hazard information, and road data would be valuable in enhancing emergency planning, response, mitigation, and recovery efforts by the county or other state or local organizations. Changes to the Clarke County GIS were seen as natural steps to the evolution of their system. The additions to the county GIS were easy to accomplish with a greater knowledge of available data files and the cooperation of other government agencies such as the post office.

Local governments should view GIS as a useful tool that can be obtained on even a small budget. Early initiatives into GIS may have cost local governments large sums of money. Personal computers that can run 32 bit operating systems with large storage capacity make GIS affordable and easy to establish, even in a small community such as Clarke County. The uses of the Clarke County GIS will expand as more agencies become involved and as the cost of computers and programs continue to drop. Clarke County found that their GIS had benefits for emergency management and even more so for other applications within the jurisdiction.

APPENDIX A
1990 Census Population Data
Virginia
Clarke County

STF 3A Files 1992

#### 1990 Census of Population and Housing 040 Virginia 050 Clarke County

URBAN AND RURAL RESIDENCE Total population	7 6 4 4
SCHOOL ENROLLMENT Persons 3 years and over enrolled in school	1 9 6
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT Persons 25 years and over	70326460
RESIDENCE IN 1985       11,33         Persons 5 years and over       11,33         Lived in same house       6,34         Lived in different house in U.S       4,96         Same State       4,190         Same county       1,37         Different county       2,816         Different State       770         Lived abroad       30	2 6 0 2 8 6
DISABILITY OF CIVILIAN NONINSTITUTIONALIZED PERSONS Persons 16 to 64 years	1643348083
CHILDREN       EVER       BORN       PER       1,000       WOMEN         Women       15       to       24       years       .36         Women       25       to       34       years       .1,10         Women       35       to       44       years       .1,64	2
VETERAN STATUS Civilian veterans 16 years and over	
NATIVITY AND PLACE OF BIRTH Native population	1
LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME Persons 5 years and over	21 54 1 15 72

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Quick Response Report #99 - Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in Small Communities: Application of GIS in Err         Total ancestries reported.       7,695         Arab
West Indian (excluding Hispanic origin groups)
1990 Census of Population and Housing 040 Virginia 050 Clarke County
Total housing units4,5
YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT         1989 to March 1990       1         1985 to 1988       3         1980 to 1984       4         1970 to 1979       1,09         1960 to 1969       5

	26 02
	38 07 16 33 8 0 6
1985 to 1988	86 09 37 23 96 85
TELEPHONE No telephone in unit	15
VEHICLES AVAILABLE       0ccupied housing units       4,2         None       32         1       97         2       1,78         3 or more       1,15	27 72 36
\$300 to \$499. 1 \$500 to \$699. 20 \$700 to \$999. 4' \$1,000 to \$1,499. 2' \$1,500 to \$1,999. \$2,000 or more. Median (dollars). 7' Not mortgaged. 91 Less than \$100. \$100 to \$199. 45200 to \$299. \$300 to \$399. \$300 to \$399. \$300 or more.	88 71 88 75 74 78 81 79 17 46 62 33 96
25 to 29 percent	88
Less than \$200\$200 to \$299	48 64 59 92
1990 Census of Population and Housing 040 Virginia 050 Clarke County	
\$5,000 to \$9,999. 22 \$10,000 to \$14,999. 33 \$15,000 to \$24,999. 58 \$25,000 to \$34,999. 74 \$35,000 to \$49,999. 92	35 24 21 37 84 45 17

\$75,000 to \$99,999. 294 \$100,000 to \$149,999. 173 \$150,000 or more. 79 Median household income (dollars) 34,636	
Families	
Nonfamily households. 942 Less than \$5,000. 151 \$5,000 to \$9,999. 93 \$10,000 to \$14,999. 136 \$15,000 to \$24,999. 187 \$25,000 to \$34,999. 155 \$35,000 to \$49,999. 127 \$50,000 to \$74,999. 78 \$75,000 to \$99,999. 0 \$100,000 to \$149,999. 12 \$150,000 or more. 3 Median nonfamily household income (dollars) 20,216	
Per capita income (dollars)15,657	
INCOME TYPE IN 1989     Households	3333
POVERTY STATUS IN 1989 All persons for whom poverty status is determined	-
Persons 18 years and over. 9,048 Below poverty level. 740 Persons 65 years and over 1,560 Below poverty level. 247	)
Related children under 18 years. 2,648 Below poverty level. 266 Related children under 5 years 753 Below poverty level. 65 Related children 5 to 17 years 1,895 Below poverty level. 201	
Unrelated individuals	;
All families	) }
Female householder families	
With related children under 18 years	}

Below poverty level	8
Percent below poverty level:	
All persons.  Persons 18 years and over.  Persons 65 years and over.  Related children under 18 years.  Related children under 5 years.  Related children 5 to 17 years.  Unrelated individuals.	8.2 15.8 10.0 8.6 10.6
All families	6.6 7.9 7.0
Female householder families.  With related children under 18 years.  With related children under 5 years.	10.2
1990 Census of Population and Housing	
040 Virginia 050 Clarke County	
LABOR FORCE STATUS Persons 16 years and over  In labor force. Percent in labor force. Civilian labor force. Employed. Unemployed. Percent unemployed. Armed Forces. Not in labor force.	5,352 65.8 5,344 5,190 154 2.4
Males 16 years and over  In labor force	3,505 74.3 3,501 3,431 70 2.0 4
Females 16 years and over  In labor force	2,847 57.8 2,843 2,759 84 3.0
Females 16 years and over.  With own children under 6 years.  Percent in labor force.  With own children 6 to 17 years only.  Percent in labor force.	627 62.2 719
Own children under 6 years in families and subfamilies All parents present in household in labor force	
Own children 6 to 17 years in families and subfamilies	1,637 1,222
Persons 16 to 19 years	608 114 63 2 49
COMMUTING TO WORK Workers 16 years and over	70.8

Percent using public transportation	0.4
OCCUPATION Employed persons 16 years and over	543 673 195 671 857 65 79 692 403 ,030 381 246
INDUSTRY Employed person 16 years and over	,190 511 11 854 506 443 211 140 147 995 368 270 207 76 296 429 420 306
CLASS OF WORKER  Employed persons 16 years and over 6  Private wage and salary workers 4  Government workers  Local government workers State government workers Federal government workers  Self-employed workers Self-employed workers	,700 824 408 139 277 600
1990 Census Of Population And Housing Summary Tape File 3A 040 Virginia 050 Clarke County	
INDUSTRY Universe: Employed persons 16 years and over  Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries (000-039). Mining (040-059). Construction (060-099). Manufacturing, nondurable goods (100-229). Manufacturing, durable goods (230-399). Transportation (400-439). Communications and other public utilities (440-499). Wholesale trade (500-579). Retail trade (580-699).	511 11 854 506 443 211 140 147 995
Finance, insurance, and real estate (700-720)  Business and repair services (721-760)  Personal services (761-799)  Entertainment and recreation services (800-811)  Professional and related services (812-899):  Health services (812-840)  Educational services (842-860)  Other professional and related services (841, 861-899)  Public administration (900-939)	368 270 207 76 296 429 420 306

1990 Census Of Population And Housing Summary Tape File 3A

#### 040 Virginia 050 Clarke County

OCCUPATION Universe: Employed persons 16 years and over
Managerial and professional specialty occupations (000-202):  Executive, administrative, and managerial occupations (000-042) 543  Professional specialty occupations (043-202)
Private household occupations (403-412)
Transportation and material moving occupations (803-863) 246 Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers (864-902) 355
1990 Census of Population and Housing 040 Virginia 160 Berryville town
URBAN AND RURAL RESIDENCE Total population. 3,097 Urban population. 3,097 Percent of total population. 100.0 Rural population. 0 Percent of total population 0.0 Farm population. 0
SCHOOL ENROLLMENT Persons 3 years and over enrolled in school 541 Preprimary school 32 Elementary or high school 450 Percent in private school 4.0 College. 59
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT Persons 25 years and over. 2,184 Less than 9th grade. 303 9th to 12th grade, no diploma. 343 High school graduate. 773 Some college, no degree. 356 Associates degree. 70 Bachelor's degree. 224 Graduate or professional degree 115 Percent high school graduate or higher 70.4 Percent bachelor's degree or higher 15.5
RESIDENCE IN 1985       2,908         Lived in same house.       1,698         Lived in different house in U.S.       1,208         Same State.       1,019         Same county.       468         Different county.       551         Different State.       189         Lived abroad.       2
DISABILITY OF CIVILIAN NONINSTITUTIONALIZED PERSONS  Persons 16 to 64 years
With a self-care limitation. 41 With a work disability. 123 In labor force. 50 Prevented from working. 60 Persons 65 years and over. 507 With a mobility or self-care limitation. 69

With a mobility limitation	68 34
CHILDREN EVER BORN PER 1,000 WOMEN Women 15 to 24 years	385 954 ,793
VETERAN STATUS Civilian veterans 16 years and over	327 90
NATIVITY AND PLACE OF BIRTH Native population	074 70.4 23 6
LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME  Persons 5 years and over	,908 63 22 24 15 3
ANCESTRY Total ancestries reported	,789 0
Austrian Belgian Canadian Czech Danish Dutch English Finnish French (except Basque) French Canadian German Gerek Hungarian Irish Italian Lithuanian Norwegian Polish Portuguese Romanian Russian Scotch-Irish Scottish Slovak Subsaharan African Swedish Swiss Ukrainian United States or American Welsh West Indian (excluding Hispanic origin groups) Yugoslavian Other ancestries	0 0 0 18 7 49 337 63 19 373 3 2 244 31 4 0 0 94 46 4 0 2 2 0 0 185 30 0 0 185 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
1990 Census of Population and Housing 040 Virginia 160 Boyce town	
URBAN AND RURAL RESIDENCE  Total population.  Urban population.  Percent of total population.  Rural population.  Percent of total population.  10 Farm population.	7
Persons 3 years and over enrolled in school	121

Preprimary school	6
Bachelor's degree	7 8 7 8 7 2 9
RESIDENCE IN 1985	0 79 4 8 6
With a mobility limitation.  With a self-care limitation.  With a work disability.  In labor force.  Prevented from working.  Persons 65 years and over.  With a mobility or self-care limitation.  With a mobility limitation.	0 0 0 3
CHILDREN EVER BORN PER 1,000 WOMEN         Women 15 to 24 years	0
Women 15 to 24 years       294         Women 25 to 34 years       1,500         Women 35 to 44 years       1,463         VETERAN STATUS	0 3
Women 15 to 24 years	0 3 52 .7
Women 15 to 24 years. 29 Women 25 to 34 years. 1,500 Women 35 to 44 years. 1,463  VETERAN STATUS Civilian veterans 16 years and over. 6 65 years and over. 1  NATIVITY AND PLACE OF BIRTH Native population. 507 Percent born in state of residence 82. Foreign-born population. 507 Entered the U.S. 1980 to 1990. 5  LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME Persons 5 years and over. 47 Speak a language other than English 1 Do not speak English 'very well' Speak Spanish. 12 Do not speak English 'very well' Speak Asian or Pacific Island language	0 3 52 .7 7 .2 5 0

Italian. Lithuanian. Norwegian. Polish. Portuguese. Romanian. Russian. Scotch-Irish. Scottish. Slovak. Slovak. Subsaharan African. Swedish. Swiss. Ukrainian. United States or American. Welsh. West Indian (excluding Hispanic origin groups). Yugoslavian. Other ancestries.	0 8 0 8 0 0 0 1 3 0 0 0 0 1 25 0 0 47
\$500 to \$749. \$750 to \$999. \$1,000 or more. No cash rent. Median (dollars).	221 25 0 187 441
GROSS RENT AS A PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN 1989 Specified renter-occupied housing units.  Less than 20 percent. 20 to 24 percent. 25 to 29 percent. 30 to 34 percent. 35 percent or more. Not computed.	848 298 122 97 37 105 189



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